



DIGITAL INDIA: LABOUR REFORMS AND CHALLENGES

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'Digital India' is yet another initiative with a vision to digitally empower each and every citizen of the country. Digital India project aims at broadening the digital access for Indians and making sure government functions and services are available online to citizens. It hopes to launch a number of health, education and governance initiatives digitally in an attempt to deliver the essential services to all citizens even in far-flung areas.

This vision is based on three key areas. To make various utilities available to the citizens through cutting-edge digital infrastructure is first key. With the assistance of high speed internet it will enable delivery of services like banking and access to service centers at the doorstep of citizens. The second area of vision will bring everything in the palms of people across departments and places. This will focus on governance and services. People will get their services done in real time and also with the usage of cloud services they can receive their dues. These services will definitely cut down the problems faced by people whilst for dealing with any government department, as it will ease the procedures for starting businesses in India and even the financial transactions will become effortless as people wouldn't have to set foot outside their houses. To empower citizens digitally will be the third and the foremost vision. Access to information would be easier and faster as the digital resources, like documents etc. will be easily available on the **cloud services**. This will consequently lead to a digital revolution in the country. Further, the services would be friendlier as they would be available in native languages, making their penetration comprehensible and vast.

India with this program will transform into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The idea is to provide people with a '**cradle to grave identity**' that is "**unique, lifelong and online.**" The overall scope of this program is to prepare India to have the requisite knowledge to be equipped for the future and make technology the center that enables change as conveyed by the authorities. It envisions becoming the umbrella program across sectors. The project focuses on being transformative that helps realize the popular equation i.e. $IT+IT=IT$, which means **India Today + Information Technology = India Tomorrow**.

The face of India is about to experience a big change. Where we are going to have a digitalization in almost every sector. A new wave has risen in our country of development before swearing, as a PM of India Hon'ble Mr. Modi has promised for good days to the citizens. Since his swearing as a PM, he has launched various schemes and plans for the purpose of betterment and advancement of our country in every sector.

Soon there will be 100 smart cities across the country. The 100 smart cities mission intends to promote adoption of smart solutions for efficient use of available assets, resources and infrastructure.

A smart city uses digital technologies or information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance quality and performance of urban services, to reduce costs and resource consumption, and to engage more effectively and actively with its citizens.

On 25 September 2014 initiative Make in India was launched. It is an initiative of the Government of India to encourage Multinational companies to manufacture their products in India. It focuses on 25 sectors of the economy for job creation and skill enhancement those are automobiles, chemicals, IT, pharmaceuticals, textiles, ports, aviation, leather, tourism and hospitality, wellness, railways, design manufacturing, renewable energy, mining, bio-technology, and electronics are such few sectors. It hopes to increase GDP growth and tax revenue and also aims at high quality standards and minimizing the impact on the environment. The initiative hopes to attract capital and technological investment in India. Broadband Highways, Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity, Public Internet Access Programme, E-Governance – Reforming Government through Technology, E-Kranti - Electronic delivery of services, Information for All, Electronics Manufacturing, IT for Jobs and Early Harvest Programmes are nine pillars of Digital India Programme.

Digital Locker, e-education, e-health, e-signature and national scholarship portal are some of the facilities which will be provided through this initiative.

10. radical shifts in Labour Reforms discourse by Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi

1. Labour as Stakeholders :

- For achieving all above labour class of a country plays a very important role. Labours are the key factors because of whose skill and hard work rise in the economy can be witnessed. And so does the labour law plays an important role for securing rights of the labours and providing different rules and guidelines for it. The contribution of the labourers, daily wages workers etc., in the development of the nation as a whole, is highly significant.

2. Dignity of labour:

- Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi said that we are not respectful towards the labourers, calling it a fault in our manner. Over the years the dignity of labour has been lost. We need to reinstate the society's outlook towards labours, if we want to progress. Citing his mantra of 'minimum government, maximum governance',
- The many laws which governments, industrialists, labourers, trade unions use as a shield to hide behind. Throughout the years, whatever progress made, has been in pieces, but the present scenario requires for all of them to work in union. A deeper understanding between the employer and labourers, for any industry to prosper, rather than formulate innumerable laws to resolve long-standing issues.

3. Entrepreneurship & Innovation:

- Hon'ble Mr. Modi stressed on innovation, asking that industry and government should see if opportunities are provided for the same. He said that we have to modify the way industries work so that one day a worker can become an entrepreneur himself. This encouragement is lacking in the current scenario.
- IT firms have done well as the employees have been allowed to develop software, providing both motivation and opportunity. Have we given the labourers an opportunity for innovation was Mr. Modi's question to the gathering. Recognition of labourers who though ordinary, have brought about innovation, changing lives, needs to be made.

4. Skill development and apprenticeships:

- The need for certifying an unskilled labourer, regardless of his age, so that there are opportunities available to him elsewhere, other than what his parents did and he himself eventually ended up. Mr. Modi drew attention to the fact that 65% of the population in the country is less than 35 years of age. Today the world needs skilled workforce and hence the Skilled India initiative to address this challenge, while providing opportunity to the youth.
- Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi said that we have no right to close the door of opportunity for unemployed youth who are searching for opportunities. The government is providing apprenticeship for such individuals who due to poverty cannot obtain skill. China has 2 crore people working in apprenticeship programme, Japan has 1 crore, Germany 30 lakhs, while in India only 3 lakhs among 1.5 billion individuals are under apprenticeships. Not only the government but industrialists too have to provide opportunities for the youth.
- It's the industry's social responsibility to provide apprenticeships even though it translates into a reduction in the profit made.

5. Achievable Goals:

- Setting up achievable goals, from 3 lakh apprenticeship to 20 lakhs. We need to start from somewhere if we want crores of youth to get employed. Those who are working for the labourers benefit today, need to keep in perspective the future of those who will be joining the workforce in the coming years.

6. Empowering labourers making use of ICT technology:

- Under the Shramev Jayate initiative started last year, over 4 crore labourers have benefited from the Universal Account Number which made the provi-

dent fund accounts portable, making use of digital networking platform, simplifying lives of numerous labourers.

7. Minimum pension:

- The minimum pension amount for labourers have been raised to Rs. 1000, from paltry amounts of Rs. 80 or Rs. 100, even though the cost has to be borne by the government.
- Hon'ble Mr. Modi called upon the Labour organisations and trade unions to take note of the proactive initiatives by the government, so that all those who are working for the benefit of labourers, are encouraged.
- Hon'ble Mr. Modi stated that he wants to move forward with the help of a partnership between trade unions and government.

8. Online Health records of employees:

- Health of employees have been given priority, and hence the health records have been made online, accessible by a mobile phone, for their convenience.
- Stating that the unorganised workforce makes up for 93% of the total, the new initiatives, focusing on providing social security, health security, life insurance and pension, have been undertaken for their benefit.

9. For the uneducated labourers

- For the uneducated labourers, social security issue has been addressed by the government in the form of key initiatives. The participation of the employers too have been called for, contributing towards the schemes launched by the government and even the trade unions have been encouraged to participate.

10. Generate Social Awareness

- Aiming to generate social awareness to bring about a social change, Hon'ble PM Modi stated that it is through mutual cooperation and discussion that all issues related to labour and unemployment can be addressed, enabling the nation to scale new heights in the future.

While the Centre has amended the Apprentices Act, 1961 and the Labour Laws (Exemption from Furnishing Returns and Maintaining Registers by Certain Establishments) Act, amendments to the Factories Act, 1948 are pending with Parliament. It has also finalised changes to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 and is working on an umbrella legislation for small factories as well as easier laws of retrenchment of workers. The government has also set up a high-level inter-ministerial committee under Finance Minister to evolve a consensus on labour reforms.

E-Kranti: The Union Cabinet approved the approach and key components of the e-Kranti or National eGovernance Plan (NeGP) on March 25, 2015. E-Kranti is one of the components of the Digital India programme. The aim of the programme is to deliver all government services electronically to citizens, at affordable costs, while ensuring efficiency and transparency. The e-Kranti programme is being launched to improve delivery of government services such as e-education, ehealthcare, etc. Some of e-Kranti's key principles include providing ICT infrastructure on demand, cloud by default, fast tracking approvals, National GeoSpatial Information System, etc. The programme management structure approved for Digital India would be used for monitoring the implementation of e-Kranti as well.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India has taken some initiative to revamp in governance to achieve the objective of simplifying business regulations and for transparency and accountability of labour inspections leads to attract investors to achieve the objective of "Make in India". The initiative e-governance is to deliver all government services electronically to citizens via integrated, interoperable systems through multiple modes. These e-governance services include:

- Shram Suvidha Web Portal
- Transparent Central Labour Inspection Scheme for Random Inspection of Units
- e=Easier Social Security (EPFO)
- e=Efficient Health and Insurance (ESIC)
- e=Expertise in Training (DGET)
- e=Extra reach for Unorganized Workers (DGLW)

The e-Governance of labour legislation Shram Suvidha web portal helpful to the employers and working class to know labour legislations that their establishment has to follow. The e-governance of labour laws, labour inspections and its enforcement leads to robust industrial relations in the country. Labour inspection have to strengthen by evaluating performance review of labour inspectors regularly to avoid "Inspector Raj" perceptions towards friendly inspections at enterprises with employers and working class to enforce labour legislations to pause industrial unrest in India.

Conclusion :

India's labour laws as a archaic. labour is a stakeholder in the economy. Therefore, by reforming the economy and labour laws, can boost the economy, producing benefits for labour, The end game of boosting economy is to generate employment, this reforms as not benefiting just one end of the spectrum. The thrust of the reforms should be that every stakeholder progressively expands, grows and benefits in the process.

Reforms are a must, they must be consensual and persuasive and not a gun to the head. One must accept both sides of the equation; it should benefit both the labour and the industry. labour reforms as the way forward for the progress of the industry, business and labour. The reforms should not be about downsizing, or hiring and firing. Rather, they should focus on transforming our labour force to embrace the numerous opportunities available to us today.

No doubt these initiatives are highly applaudable, as it will put India in the top list of developed countries. And yes the labour laws do need to go under changes as they date back to the time of British. With the advancement of technology in the field of business and skill, it is high time that the labour laws should be with the tune of such technologies. Also it will stop exploitation of labours as check will be transparent and open for all if labour practices are put digital. All eyes set on the new reforms now.